

Book Review

**THE METABOLIC AND MOLECULAR BASES
OF INHERITED DISEASE, 7th ed.**

**C.R. Scriver, A.L. Beaudet, W.S. Sly, D. Valle,
Vol. 3, McGraw Hill, New York, 1995, pp. 4605.**

The new edition of the world standard reference of metabolic diseases is considerably expanded to include diseases and syndromes with any "identifiable molecular explanation—and it affects a dynamic phenotype, metabolic or otherwise." The result is a massive, superb labor of love of the four editors supplemented with consulting editors of the 1st edition (one volume, 1960), Stanbury, Wyngaarden, and Frederickson in three volumes and over 300 contributors. This arbeit represents a significant step toward the answer posed by Erwin Schrödinger in 1944 to the question "What is life?", which influenced the development of molecular biology.

The present edition contains a significant alteration of title with the addition of the words "and molecular" and "Basis" is now plural. Among the 32 new chapters are molecular discussions of cancer, the eye and others, as well as many more complete and separate chapters on other inborn errors. The philosophical discussion of mechanisms contained in the previous edition is expanded.

While the clinical descriptions in this volume are much more complete and useful than those in previous editions, the editor's prediction "that the 'classic' textbooks in the future will look more and more like MMBID" appears overly sadistic.

The diseases included, the editors note, are limited to those we know most about. More are predicted for the future. Almost certainly, obesity will be included. Hopefully violence and moral decay will have identifiable metabolic and/or genetic bases which can be categorized. The suggestion that future editions be in CD-ROM format seems reasonable since the weight of the 3 volumes is uncomfortable and bursitis-generating.

This book is a required reference for anyone caring for any fetus, pregnant woman, child or adult suspected of having a metabolic disease. It is of inestimable value to geneticists, biochemists and clinicians caring for affected patients as well as those interested in learning modern concepts of inheritance and other factors affecting gene modification.

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